

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are pending in this application. With the above Amendment, Claims 1, 4-8, 11-15, and 17-20 have been amended and Claim 16 has been canceled. Thus, Claims 1-15 and 17-20 are presently at issue.

35 U.S.C. §102 Rejection of Claims 1-3, 5-8, 11-13, and 15-18

Claims 1-3, 5-8, 11-13, and 15-18 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by *Brown* (U.S. Patent No. 4,821,917).

Applicant has amended Claim 1, which is now directed to a method of transporting and installing articles slated for inventory to an article dispensing machine. The method includes loading a plurality of articles of inventory into an article transport storage unit, and assigning the article transport storage unit to an article dispensing machine, wherein the *article dispensing machine comprises an article transport storage unit receiving station and at least one article storage rack*. The method further includes causing the article transport storage unit to be in a locked condition wherein the plurality of articles of inventory cannot be accessed, and causing delivery of the locked article transport storage unit to the article dispensing machine. The method also includes permitting *installation of the locked article transport storage unit into the article transport storage unit receiving station* of the article dispensing machine, and following installation of the article transport storage unit into the article transport storage unit receiving station of the article dispensing machine, causing the *article transport storage unit to enter an unlocked condition for allowing unloading of the plurality of articles of inventory to occur*. The method further includes *automatically unloading the plurality of articles from the unlocked article transport storage unit and transferring the plurality of articles to the at least one storage rack for later rental or purchase of the plurality of articles*. (emphasis added).

Applicant has also amended Claim 11, which is now directed to a method of transporting and installing articles slated for inventory to an article dispensing machine. The method includes storing a first plurality of articles of inventory within a first article transport storage unit to be installed within an article dispensing machine, wherein the *article dispensing machine comprises an article transport storage unit receiving station and at least one article storage rack*, and assigning the first article transport storage unit to the article dispensing machine. The method

also includes causing the first article transport storage unit to be in a locked condition wherein the first plurality of articles of inventory cannot be accessed, and causing delivery of the locked first article transport storage unit to the article dispensing machine. The method further includes *automatically transferring a second plurality of articles of inventory, positioned within the at least one storage rack, from the at least one storage rack to a second article transport storage unit, and loading the second plurality of articles of inventory into the second article transport storage unit*, and causing entry of a command at the article dispensing machine. The method also includes causing the second article transport storage unit storing the second plurality of articles of inventory, positioned within the article transport storage unit receiving station of the article dispensing machine to enter a locked condition in response to the command, and causing *ejection of the locked second article transport storage unit from the article transport storage unit receiving station* of the article dispensing machine. The method further includes causing removal of said locked second article transport storage unit away from said article dispensing machine, and permitting installation of the locked first article transport storage unit into the article transport storage unit receiving station of the article dispensing machine. The method also includes, following installation of the first article transport storage unit into the article dispensing machine, causing the first article transport storage unit to enter an unlocked condition wherein the first plurality of articles of inventory are accessible. (emphasis added).

Applicant has also amended Claim 18 to convert it to an independent claim of differing scope from original Claim 18, and is now directed to a method of transporting and installing articles slated for inventory to an article dispensing machine. The method includes loading a plurality of articles of inventory into an article transport storage unit. The article transport storage unit has *an opaque housing which is constructed to prevent the plurality of articles of inventory from being visually identified from outside of the article transport storage unit after the articles of inventory are loaded into the article transport storage unit*. The method further includes assigning the article transport storage unit to an article dispensing machine, with the *article dispensing machine having an article transport storage unit receiving station*. The method also includes *causing the article transport storage unit to be in a locked condition wherein the plurality of articles of inventory cannot be accessed*. The method further includes

causing delivery of the locked article transport storage unit to the article dispensing machine, and *permitting installation of the locked article transport storage unit into the article transport storage unit receiving station of the article dispensing machine.* The method also includes, *following installation of the article transport storage unit into the article transport storage unit receiving station of the article dispensing machine, causing the article transport storage unit to enter an unlocked condition for allowing access to the plurality of articles.* (emphasis added).

As mentioned above, the Examiner has cited *Brown* as anticipating at least independent Claims 1 and 11 above. *Brown* is directed to a storage and dispensing device for use in a tape cassette dispensing machine for directly dispensing cassettes to purchasers using the device. The device has a bin 1 with side by side sliding compartments 11. Each compartment 11 is slidable to extend from one bin front side 3 to expose an open compartment side 14 for insertion or removal of a cassette. The bin 1 is mounted by means of two tongues 6 extending from each of the upper and lower bin sides. The tongues 6 extend rearwardly from the upper and lower bin sides. Each tongue has an opening 7 with a slot 8 and a locking rod 52 is inserted into a pair of slots. (See Abstract, and Figures 1 and 3). The compartment 11 is slideable between a closed position within the bin 1 in which the compartment 11 interior is inaccessible for removal of a cassette, and a open position extended from a front side 3 of the bin 1 in which the compartments 11 are accessible for removal and insertion of a cassette. (Col. 1, lines 26-32). Each compartment 11 is rectangular of a size that will enable it to receive a video tape cassette. The compartment 11 is of a clear plastic, presumably to allow a potential purchaser to see the titles of the cassettes when the cassettes are inserted into the compartments 11 within a bin 1, with such bin 1 inserted locked into the cassette machine with rods 52. (See Col. 2, lines 62-66). Top and bottom runners 18 are provided on the compartment 11, extend rearwardly from the top and bottom ends of the compartment 11, pass through slots 20 in the top and bottom of the rear of the bin 1, and have clip formations 22 to prevent the compartment from being completely withdrawn from the bin 1. The compartments 11 slide in and out of the bins 1 along the runners 18. (See Col. 2, line 68 to col. 3, line 10). A solenoid pin hole 30 in the bottom runner 18 of each compartment 11 is engagable by a solenoid pin 32 (Fig. 2) moving under force of gravity, as the compartment 11 is pushed closed. This locks the compartment 11 in the bin 1. When the

solenoid is activated, the pin 32 retracts upwardly and releases the spring-biased compartment 11 to allow the cassette in the compartment 11 to be removed. A micro-switch detects release of the compartment 11 and provides an electrical signal feedback to the dispensing machine control means indicating release of a particular compartment 11. (*See* col. 33, lines 22-37).

In relation to Claim 1, on the contrary, *Brown* does not disclose, teach, or suggest an article dispensing machine having both an article transport storage unit receiving station where the article transport storage unit is loaded into, and an article storage rack where the plurality of articles are transferred to (from the article transport storage unit), as required by Claim 1 of the present invention. Nor does *Brown* disclose, teach, or suggest installation of the locked article transport storage unit into the article transport storage unit receiving station in a locked condition, and unlocking of the article transport storage unit for allowing the plurality of articles to be automatically unloaded, as required by Claim 1 of the present invention. *Brown* also does not disclose, teach, or suggest automatically unloading the plurality of articles from the unlocked article transport storage unit and transferring such articles to the storage rack from the article transport storage unit. Thus, Applicants submit that amended Claim 1 is allowable over *Brown*.

In relation to Claim 11, *Brown* again does not disclose, teach, or suggest an article dispensing machine having both an article transport storage unit receiving station where the article transport storage unit is loaded into, and an article storage rack where the plurality of articles are transferred from (to the article transport storage unit), as required by Claim 11 of the present invention. Nor does *Brown* disclose, teach, or suggest automatically transferring a plurality of articles positioned within the storage rack from the storage rack to a second article transport storage unit, and loading the plurality of articles into the second article transport storage unit. The locked second article transport storage unit is then ejected from the article transport storage unit receiving station for bringing back old and/or extra titles which have been removed from the storage rack to the article distribution facility, as required by Claim 11. Thus, Applicants submit that amended Claim 11 is also allowable over *Brown*.

In relation to Claim 18, *Brown* does not disclose, teach, or suggest an article transport storage unit having an opaque housing which is constructed to prevent the plurality of articles of inventory from being visually identified from outside of the article transport storage unit after the

articles of inventory are loaded into the article transport storage unit, as required by Claim 18. One primary goal of the present invention is to prevent theft of the articles of inventory during transport from/to the article distribution facility. Thus, both not being able to see the articles and not being able to unlock the article transport storage unit during transport is significant, to at least prevent or discourage theft of the articles. Moreover, these features of the present invention more easily allows a distributor of the articles to outsource the transporting task of the present invention to an unrelated third party (common) carrier, which significantly reduces costs of company controlled transport vehicles and personnel. This is only a realistic option when risk of theft is significantly reduced. In *Brown*, the type of articles and even the titles of the articles are visible from looking at the articles within the bins during transport. Further, one of ordinary skill in the art would understand that transport personnel would easily be able to remove the solenoid pin to obtain access to the articles, easily allowing for theft to occur. On the contrary, only after the article transport storage unit is placed within the article transport storage unit receiving station can the article transport storage unit be unlocked, which is then done automatically. Only then can removal of the articles from the article transport storage unit occur. Likewise, the article transport storage unit cannot be removed from the article transport storage unit receiving station until the article transport storage unit is locked. Thus, Applicants submit that amended Claim 18 is further allowable over *Brown*.

Claims 2-10, 12-15, 17, and 19-20 all depend directly or indirectly on Claims 1, 11, or 18, and necessarily include all of the limitations of Claims 1, 11, or 18. Thus, based on at least the limitations and amendments within Claims 1, 11 and 18, as well as the above remarks for Claims 1, 11, and 18, Applicants submit that Claims 2-10, 12-15, 17, and 19-20 are allowable over *Brown*.

35 U.S.C. §103(a) Rejections

Several dependent claims have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over *Brown* in view of other references. For each such rejection, *Brown* was cited as anticipating the independent claim upon which each such rejected dependent claim was based. Thus, in view of the above amendments within Claims 1, 11 and 18, as well as the above remarks for Claims 1,

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11, and 18, Applicants submit that all rejected dependent claims are allowable over *Brown* in view of the other cited references.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request allowance of Claims 1-15 and 17-20 in the present Application. Applicants submits that this Application is in condition for allowance and respectfully request an early notice of the same.

Respectfully submitted,

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